

California History

The Magazine of the California Historical Society

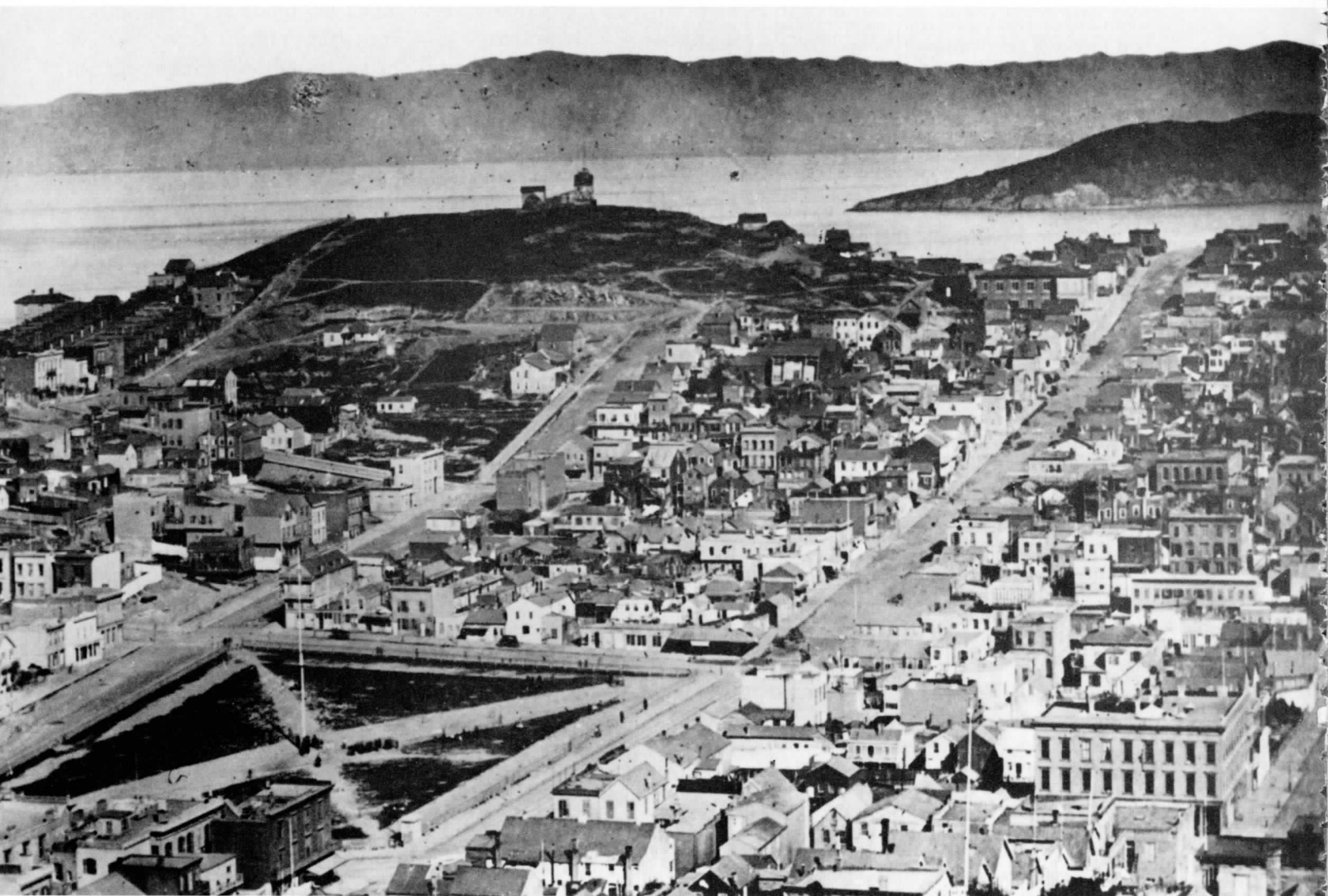
winter 1981/82



Gertrude Atherton and Ambrose Bierce

The Italians of San Francisco in 1865:

G. B. Cerruti's Report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



North Beach in 1865 was home for most of San Francisco's Italian community. The open area is Washington Square Park. In the distance is Telegraph Hill.

of G.B. Cerruti's activities during his ten-year sojourn in San Francisco. From his diplomatic correspondence, Cerruti emerges as a competent and responsible civil servant with a penchant for thoroughness, and as a compassionate man who often went beyond formal duty to aid his compatriots in distress. His consular report of 1865 clearly reveals that the early Italian nucleus in California was not as economically self-sufficient nor as stable as is commonly assumed. The false allure of overnight wealth in the gold mines led to broken dreams and at times broken health, and to a considerable number of indigent, sick and transient Italians, many of whom eventually found their way onto San Francisco's streets. Cerruti relates the sad stories of some of these persons (including the pathetic case of Davide Cochi, blind, broke and abandoned by his friends), and recounts what he was able to do for them on a personal, humanitarian level. These were unselfish acts of kindness which redeem him, one might say, from his other role as *longa manus* of the Royal Italian Army and its conscription service on the Pacific Coast. On an institutional level, Cerruti was involved in the administration of the Italian Mutual Benefit Society, as president in 1865 and then as its secretary in the following two years. From another source, we also learn that in 1870-71, the Italian consul was vice-president of the local French Savings and Loan Society.⁶

Both of these affiliations are links to a much-neglected figure of the early history of San Francisco, Nicola (Nicholas) Larco, whose name appears at several intervals in the consular report. A *paesano* of Cerruti, Larco was also born in the province of Genoa, at Santa Margherita Ligure, in 1818. He had come to San Francisco in 1849 from Lima, Peru, where he had already amassed considerable means; and here he soon established himself as an import-export commission dealer in groceries, provisions and coffee on

Jackson Street between Sansome and Montgomery, where we find him from 1850 to 1876. In addition, he owned a fleet of commercial vessels regularly operating between Mexico and San Francisco.⁷ There is no doubt that during his heyday in the 1850s and 1860s Larco was the leading Italian merchant of the Pacific Coast, and indeed a reliable source claims that he headed the largest import-export house in the City.⁸ This was at a time when the Ligurians, who it is said accounted for ninety percent of the state's Italian population,⁹ dominated the San Francisco fishing industry as well as truck farming and the produce market, and the leading commission merchants of the Italian community were Genoese. Against this backdrop emerged Nicholas Larco, "l'astro maggiore della nostra colonia," as he was defined by an anonymous biographer.¹⁰

To his credit, Larco was one of the few Italian businessmen to assume an active role of leadership in the young and disorganized community. In this capacity, he was the chief promoter and first president of the *Società Italiana di Mutua Beneficenza* in 1858, an office he held intermittently into the 1860s. It is partially in this guise that Larco and Cerruti are linked in the pages of the latter's report of 1865. But their collaboration within the Society and without extended beyond humanitarianism and ethnic solidarity.

The Italian Mutual Benefit Society, which has survived to this day as the oldest continuing Italian institution in the United States, had an early history racked by financial difficulties, personal jealousies, regional rivalries, and not least of all the political conflict which divided the colony between monarchists and republicans. From 1862, under the presidency of Larco, one element of divisiveness was

eliminated when the Society restricted its membership solely to immigrants from the region of Liguria.¹¹ Political divisions, though, continued to beset the organization. Since it could be employed as an important source of patronage, the Society was a bone of contention between the Mazzinian faction, led by Angelo Mangini and Carlo Dondero, and those loyal to the ruling dynasty of Savoy. Among the latter were Federico Biesta, former acting consul of Sardinia, Augusto B. Splivalo and Raffaele Ancarani, co-owners of *La Parola*, G. B. Cerruti, as official representative of the Kingdom, and Nicola Larco.¹²

Larco's services to the monarchy were of long standing and importance, outside of the Society as well. In 1859, for example, he had financed Biesta's fledgling *L'Eco della Patria*.¹³ It is thus no surprise that in 1865 the editorial offices of another royalist paper, *La Parola*, were housed in the same building as Larco's firm at 430 Jackson Street (incidentally, also the address of the Mutual Benefit Society).¹⁴ The Italian consul for his part was in an excellent position to reward this loyal collaborator. Cerruti obtained for him a nomination as knight of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus. But more concrete and lucrative expressions of appreciation were also involved. As Larco was an importer and owned merchant ships of Italian registry, it is clear that Cerruti's suggestion to Turin to provide facilities for Italian navigation in California waters would have been of mutual benefit both to the commerce of the Kingdom and to the affairs of Nicholas Larco.

G. B. Cerruti's presence on the board of directors of the French Savings and Loan Society is a further tie between these two men, as well as an indication of the widespread cooperation between the Italian and French communities in early San Francisco. Nicholas Larco had been a founding officer of this

same *Société Française d'Épargnes et de Prévoyance Mutuelle* in 1860 and remained its vice-president through 1862. In fact, Larco was ubiquitous in the charitable and mutual aid institutions of the French colony, where he held various posts of responsibility: among these, member of the founding committee of the *Société de Rapatriement* (1856) for the repatriation of aged and infirm Frenchmen; member of the French Mutual Benefit Society and of its committee to determine the cost and financing of the projected French Hospital (1857); founding officer of the welfare agency which went under the name of *Société de Secours* (1859).

As would be supposed, however, Larco's association with the French community extended beyond philanthropy to joint business ventures. The two, of course, are not mutually exclusive, and indeed one could prove a source of contacts for the other. For example, through both avenues, Larco had occasion to collaborate with Gustave Mahé, simultaneously president of the Mutual Benefit Society and manager of the Savings and Loan Society. In the Buenaventura Mining Company, established in 1863, a venture with interests in gold and coal mines, the fifteen founding shareholders were preponderantly French and Italian. Among them we find Larco, as secretary, along with another Genoese who had come to California via Peru, the chocolate manufacturer Domenico Ghirardelli.¹⁵ President of the company was Justinien Caire, again also involved with Larco as an officer of both the mutual aid society and the savings bank. Finally, Larco's French connection extended to politics. An instance of this is his participation in the celebrations of November 26, 1855, on the occasion of the taking of Sebastopol in the Crimean War, in which he and Ghirardelli were the official Sardinian representatives, alongside their French and English counterparts.¹⁶

Nicholas Larco's activities within and with the French colony are part of the wider context of Franco-Italian cooperation in early San Francisco, a symbiosis which ranged from journalism, to mutual aid and medical institutions, to business and politics. The first Italian newspapers in San Francisco, which appeared fleetingly in the mid-1850s, were actually one-page supplements to the Spanish colony's organ *La Crónica* and to *Le Phare*, a French semi-weekly. The French Savings and Loan Society in which Larco and Cerruti were involved also provided health insurance. Investment and membership in it were shared between the two communities to such a degree that the institution was officially known under both its French and Italian names¹⁷ and published its proceedings in both languages. Cooperation with the French also characterized the early history of the Italians' own benevolent association. For example, from 1859 to 1861, the Italian Mutual Benefit Society sent its members to the French Hospital for major medical care, an arrangement resumed after the demise of the Society's own hospital in 1874. Moreover, the funds collected in 1865 to build this short-lived Italian Hospital had been deposited by Cerruti with the French Savings and Loan Society.

In the report of this consul, Franco-Italian political collaboration is also indicated, with reference to the protection mutually extended to each other's nationals by Italian and French consular agents in the Isthmus of Panama. In San Francisco, before Cerruti's arrival, the affairs of the Sardinian and later Italian government had been handled by the French consul, Patrice Guillaume Dillon, from 1853 to 1857, and then by Benjamin Davidson, as acting consul for the Kingdom in 1857-62. Though Davidson was an Englishman by birth, he was local representative of the French Rothschild bank and active in the City's French colony.

Davidson had been a founding officer, along with Nicholas Larco, of the French savings bank and protective association. This brings the story back to the central figure of San Francisco's Italian community in the first two decades of its history and to his key role in the Franco-Italian combination. The preceding paragraphs have but scratched the surface of the intricate network of business partnerships, joint benevolent activities, diplomatic and political collaboration, and (it may be assumed) friendships and social relations, which linked the two immigrant groups. At the center of this web stood Nicholas Larco. Chief businessman and community leader among his own compatriots, and the only Italian widely active in the French colony as well, Larco clearly emerges as the *trait d'union*, the hyphen, in the Italian-French connection of early San Francisco.

Below the surface, however, there remains much to be explained. What were, for instance, the origins and function of this symbiosis? Dino Cinel has recently pointed out the central importance of French collaboration in providing leadership, institutional models and organizational skills to the amorphous and acephalous nascent Italian community. In short, Italian immigrants served their apprenticeship in community-building, from newspapers to mutual aid societies, at the workbench of the better-organized and more cohesive French colony. The significance of this observation in the broader context of immigration history is that in San Francisco, at least, the structures created by the early Italians were molded not by the impact of the American social environment, as is usually argued, but rather through interaction with another, better-established immigrant group.¹⁸

The question of the roots of the Franco-Italian



Photograph of the Society of California Pioneers building located on Washington Street off Kearny, across from Portsmouth Square, taken in 1867 by San Francisco photographer Alfred Perkins. Nicholas Larco, prominent merchant and leader of the Italian colony, was secretary of the Society during that period.

Prezzi d'Abbonamento.

California, Stati Uniti, Columbia Inglese e Costa del Messico, con la posta, per un anno \$8; per sei mesi, \$4 50; per tre mesi, \$2 75.
Stati Uniti sul Pacifico e Columbia Inglese, con l'Espresso di Wells, Fargo & Co. per un anno \$10; per sei mesi \$5 50; per tre mesi \$3 25.
Panama, con la posta, per un anno \$10; per sei mesi \$5 50.
In città—25 soldi la settimana pagabili al distributore.

LA PAROLA

Si pubblica ogni Giovedì e Domenica.

LA PAROLA.

Avvertimento.

Gli abbonamenti e le inserzioni d'avvisi si pagano anticipati.
Per l'abbonamento e per l'inserzione d'avvisi, indirizzare alla Direzione del giornale, No. 430 via Jackson, ultimo piano, dalle ore 8 1/2 alle 10 1/2 di mattina, o dalle 6 alle 8 di sera.
Giornali, lettere, comunicazioni, e l'invio di ogni altro documento si dirigeranno al giornale La Parola, San Francisco, California.
Le comunicazioni devono portare il nome, cognome e domicilio di chi scrive.

ORGANO DELLA POPOLAZIONE ITALO-AMERICANA SUL PACIFICO

PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP CO.,
PER PANAMA

Corrispondendo

mezzo della Ferrovia di Panama coi vapori dell'Atlantic Pacific Steamship Co. A ASPENWALL.

Partenza dal Wharf Folsom 23 Marzo 1865.—GOLDEN AGE

Alle 9 precise del mattino
L'Espresso—La ferrovia di Panama a Aspenwall coi vapori

PER NEW YORK

Vigilette per il passaggio intero possono essere ottenute dalla Compagnia della Ferrovia di Panama e dalla Compagnia Atlantic e Pacific, che hanno autorizzati agenti per la vendita di biglietti.
Per nolo o passaggio dirigersi a

O. ELDRIDGE, Agente,
Sul canto delle vie Sacramento e Leidesdorff. 51

Per Vallejo, Sonoma, Napa,
White Sulphur e Calistoga
Springs.

il vapore



Amelia

Capitano.....P. F. DOLING.
Cominciando GIOVEDÌ, 17 novembre, parte dal molo di via Broadway alle ore 11 a. m. ogni MARTEDÌ, GIOVEDÌ e SABATO.

Di ritorno—Parte da Napa ogni LUNDÌ, MERCOLEDÌ e VENERDÌ alle 9 a. m.
Per nolo di mercanzie e per passaggio dirigersi all'impiegato, il quale dall'1 alle 5 p. m. di ogni giorno si trova sul molo.

C. J. WEEKS

PER RED BLUFF

COMINCIANDO DAL GIORNO
5 di novembre e fino ad ulteriore avviso
il vapore



Red Bluff

Partirà da Sacramento City
OGNI SABATO MATTINA

288 J. WHITNEY, Jr., Presidente.

Aug. D. SPIVALLO, R. ANGARAN
—
Splivallo & Co.
Redattori. Proprietari.
OFFICE, No. 430 via JACKSON, TRA LE VIE
MONTGOMERY E SANSOME. Ultimo piano.

Tipografia del giornale LA PAROLA
27 U. S. Court Building, angolo delle vie Battery e
Washington. — San Francisco.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
15 Marzo 1865

COSE D'ITALIA.

— Scrivono dal Veneto all'Opinione di
Torino la seguente cronaca di non poco
interesse:

I confini politici non valsero giammai ad arrestare le idee. E le linee del Mincio e del Po non valgono a separare per veruna guisa queste province dal cuore dell'Italia. I fatti che costì avvengono trovano fra noi un'eco che li ripete e un sentimento che li giudica non guari disforme da quello dove i fatti stessi si svolgono. Epperò gli avvenimenti di questi ultimi tempi commossero grandemente gli animi nostri, come se fossero accaduti in mezzo a noi.

I luttuosi fatti di Morino, l'unanime risposta di tutta l'Italia, la demissione del ministro Minghetti-Peruzzi la formazione del ministero La Marmora, la convenzione franco-italiana del 15 settembre, le note diplomatiche fra il gabinetto italiano ed il francese, l'approvazione del trasferimento della capitale a Firenze, i provvedimenti finanziari proposti dal ministro Sella, la gara dei comuni italiani nell'offrire anticipato il pagamento dell'imposta fondiaria del 1865, lo splendido e confortevole risultato di tale patriottico concorso, la

e il trasferimento della capitale non come veneti, ma come italiani. Essi prevedono tutto che un tale momentissimo avvenimento non poteva a meno di non rimuovere per qualche tempo l'attenzione e gli intendimenti del governo italiano dalla questione veneta. Essi prevedono che il lungo e difficilissimo tramutamento dei dicasteri e di tutto l'amministrazione governativa, che si sta operando, non basta a quella bisogna tutte le preoccupazioni del governo italiano, e che quella primavera alla quale avevamo disposto il compimento delle nostre speranze, in cambio di aprirsi al fervore delle ultime battaglie si sarebbe invece consumata in tramutamenti burocratici, e in riassetamenti amministrativi. La riduzione dell'esercito il contingente di pace ch'essi forse non avevano prevista venne a cercar orare troppo evidentemente e troppo dolorosamente questi loro previsioni, e di tutte queste necessità politiche (a che giova dissimularlo?) fu certamente la più dura a sopportarli e la più difficile a subire senza uno schianto ed uno sconcerto che niente ancora valse ad attenuare. Ma d'altra parte l'idea che la questione romana non possa sciogliersi senza che contemporaneamente o di conseguenza insorga la necessità di scioglimento della questione veneta, le considerazioni strategiche sulla più sicura posizione della nuova capitale per cimentarsi alle supreme battaglie, l'interesse reciproco, anzi la necessità vicendevole di questa integrazione nazionale, consentita o paventata (ma ad ogni modo ammessa) dagli stessi nostri nemici, la fede incommutabile nei destini d'Italia e nel sentimento dei nostri fratelli, la impareggiabile

e le cui conseguenze durano tuttavia presentemente, dolorosissime. Dir voglio dei moti del Friuli, dei processi di Palma, di Udine, di Venezia, dell'agitazione e del rimescolamento dell'emigrazione veneta, della demissione del Comitato centrale di Torino e delle elezioni chiamate a riformarlo. Noi non verremo qui a fare recriminazioni, le quali non valgono rimediare al mal fatto, ma sono invece attardate ad inciprigire dissidi e divergenze che funzionano fin troppo la patria nostra. I fatti parlarono con troppo evidente eloquenza, le previsioni si avverarono con troppo dolorosa precisione, perchè non resti ulteriore spazio a commenti, né luogo ad argomentazioni. Oggi stesso (chi li crederebbe?) oggi ancora v'ha tra voi chi da quei fatti tragge non solo discorsi ma perfino opposte sentenze, e argomenta dall'esito dello autunno per ritentare la prova in primavera. Or bene, nessun consorzio politico può aspirare, a nostro avviso, al titolo e all'importanza di partito, se non faccia conto, oltre che dei programmi e delle aspirazioni, anche dei fatti e della realtà. È questo quell'elemento pratico, senza del quale vi potrà essere forse una sette di fenatici adepti, ma non un gran partito politico. Ritentando in primavera i moti del Friuli il partito d'azione mostrerebbe di essere destituito di quell'elemento pratico, al quale accennavamo poco fa.

Se infatti con questi moti rivoluzionari il partito d'azione non crede di poter compiere da solo l'epoca sua, ma intende con essi di trascinare il governo italiano a fare la guerra, in quale condizione troverà esso questo governo? Lo troverà tutto intento

mo a rimuoverlo da quella via, in cui necessità politiche oggimai accettate, e il volere della nazione l'hanno avviato. I moti falliranno nuovamente, il tramutamento riuscirà a mille doppi più difficile, più lungo, più dispendioso, ma si compirà egualmente e nessun profitto ne verrà. Coloro che alle difficoltà ineluttabili di situazione altre ne aggiungono artificiali inefficaci, e per ogni cosa si affrettano

Se il partito d'azione crede veramente che il paese non possa ulteriormente comportare questa ibrida situazione dell'esere o non essere padroni in casa propria, se crede che veramente nessun pericolo sia maggiore dell'attendere troppo lungamente e troppo passivamente gli eventi, non si occupi a creare difficoltà al governo in momenti già per sé difficilissimi. Non incagli con inconsulti progetti questo trasferimento e assetamento della capitale, ma invece usufrutti a tutt'uomo quel grande e aperto e costituzionale e inappellabile mezzo delle elezioni generali che si compiranno immediatamente. Mendi in maggioranza alla Camera, o almeno in proporzioni più ragguardevoli i suoi deputati, e dalle nuove aule parlamentari di Firenze intimi la guerra all'Austria e chiami i popoli all'insurrezione. Questa, a nostro avviso, sarebbe la tattica di un gran partito, questo sarebbe un programma ferace di grandi risultati, e non una meschina guerricciola di spediti alla giornata, i quali, lo ripetiamo, non giovano a nulla, o se pur giovano a qualche cosa, non è certo alla grandezza e definitiva soluzione della causa nazionale, non è certo al grande e durevole bene del paese. Nè si obbietti che la mes-

combination, however, still remains open. It has been suggested that the Savoyard element in early San Francisco provided a natural link between the two communities.¹⁹ French-speaking Savoy was ceded by the Kingdom of Sardinia to France in 1860, and thus natives of this region had, so to speak, a foot in both camps and could act as go-betweens. This was, for example, the case of Justinien Caire, who as a colleague of Larco, was involved in two of his transnational ventures. There is no evidence, though, that Savoyards were at all numerous in early San Francisco, and in any event their presence would only have facilitated the Italo-French symbiosis but could not have been its foundation.

Nor can the political alliance between Victor Emanuel II and Napoleon III be adduced to explain the cordial and productive relationship between

their respective subjects in faraway California. The contemporary European alignment conditioned, of course, diplomatic cooperation on the local level. In this light it is no surprise that Benjamin Davidson, agent of the French banking house that financed the Italian War of Independence of 1859-60, should be appointed acting consul of the Kingdom. But such political factors do not determine business partnerships and jointly shared benevolent associations, nor do they take into consideration the persistence of Franco-Italian cooperation for several years after the diplomatic estrangement of the two home countries in 1870. Besides, there were other clusters of inter-ethnic relationships in early San Francisco that should not be overlooked, and that such a political explanation cannot illuminate. Reference must be made to the wider Latin nexus that embraced Ital-

A copy of the front page of the first Italian-American newspaper La Parola dated March 16, 1865. The newspaper was published and edited by Augustus D. Splivalo, who lived and worked in Larco's building during the years 1865 and 1866. He also served as secretary of the Italian Benevolent Society which Larco founded during 1865.

ians, Frenchmen, Spaniards and Portuguese. It will be remembered, for example, that the Spanish *Crónica* had made its pages available to an early Italian-language bulletin. From 1875 to 1884, when the first Italian parish was dedicated, the Italians of the North Beach-Russian Hill area were served by the Spanish-oriented church of Our Lady of Guadalupe.²⁰ In addition, until the anti-Hispanic fervor which accompanied the Spanish American War of 1898, Columbus Day festivities in the City were jointly organized by the two nationalities. There are also indications of Italian-Portuguese cooperation. For instance, the first doctor of the Italian Mutual Benefit Society was Emanuel D'Oliveira, and for a time the local Portuguese Benevolent Society sent its sick members to the Italian Hospital.

A possible explanation of the above relationships is the reciprocal familiarity and forced interaction bred by the concentration of all the Romance immigrant groups in a so-called Latin Quarter of nineteenth-century San Francisco. However, instances of inter-Latin association can also be found in rural areas, where neighborhood concentration and physical propinquity were not involved. An interesting case is provided by the first French mutual aid society in California, founded in 1851 at Mokelumne Hill in Calaveras County. Membership in this organization was open to all French-speakers, but eligibility was also extended to the Piedmontese, Italians who speak a dialect only vaguely resembling French. And in Arizona, during the early period of settlement, Italian immigrants joined Hispanic fraternal organizations and fire companies in which several of them also became officers.²¹

The evidence of the Italian-French combination in

early San Francisco and the other cases of inter-Latin cooperation there and elsewhere demonstrate that politics and neighborhood concentration were but secondary factors. Linguistic and cultural affinity is of course an obvious and ready explanation. It is, however, only a precondition and not the determinant of inter-ethnic association. Otherwise, how can one explain why the Franco-Italian nexus, so characteristic of the early period of settlement, was practically nonexistent by the end of the century? Certainly, the cultural similarities between Frenchmen and Italians had not diminished significantly during the intervening years.

At this point, one might be tempted to argue that after 1880 mass emigration from the Italian South occasioned a regional reorientation within the community, and brought to the fore elements which were culturally different from France's northern Italian neighbors. In point of fact, however, even at the turn of the century, northerners (with the Ligurians as the largest and wealthiest group) still constituted the overwhelming majority of California's Italians and dominated the San Francisco colony, as they had at its inception fifty years earlier. Though southern immigration to California was growing, as late as 1903 fully seventy-three percent of the Italians who entered the State came from the North.²²

In the final analysis, the key to understanding the origin and nature of inter-Latin cooperation in the early West lies in a comparative overview of the experience of other immigrant groups in America. Within this broader frame of reference, we find several instances of cross-ethnic association, even to the point of common identity, which conform to a general pattern that can be applied to the case under study. Before the so-called "Green Wave" of the 1840s and 1850s, the relatively few Irish Catholics in America joined the social and fraternal organizations of the far larger Protestant Scotch-Irish group (from

Consolato di Italia / S. Francisco 3 Marzo 1865
 affari in genere



Esceilleria

cento di lavoro d'

Chiedo scusa a V. E. se dal 12 Dicembre
 a questa parte ho dovuto negligenza la cor-
 rispondenza con questo Ministero; ma tale
 tanto fu il lavoro cui ebbi a far fronte da solo in
 quest'ultimi mesi, che mi fu assolutamente
 impossibile di trovare un momento di quiete per
 soddisfare a tale dovere. I normali atti d'ufficio
 aumentarono e vanno aumentando d'affai, e
 come accessorio poi, mi caddero addosso d'un colpo
 due complicati affari, dei voluminosi atti d'una
 delle quali, ebbi a fare, a richiesta degli interessati,
 triplo copia e traduzione in inglese, un'imbandie-
 ramento d'una nave, la vendita di due altre, ed un
 cambio marittimo. Come detto che in due s' fanno
 in brevissimo tempo, ma da solo sconcertano alquanto.
 Ho cercato in questo paese un collaboratore, ma non me ho
 trovato alcuno di capace, per cui ebbi a scrivere al Plata po-
 steriori

degli affari Esteri
 Cocchi

Photograph of the first page of Giovanni Battista Cerruti's diplomatic report sent to his superiors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turin on March 3, 1865.

Ulster) and shared with them a common identification as Irishmen. Similarly, in New York City, as the Puerto Rican community expanded after World War II, the smaller Spanish, Mexican and Cuban groups became affiliated and associated with it, often assuming positions of leadership.²³

The following pattern emerges from these various cases: as long as an immigrant group is small in numbers, and therefore unable to provide an adequate base for autonomous organizations and to maintain a well-defined group identity, it tends to affiliate with, and sometimes to be absorbed by, a larger, culturally related ethnic community. The process may involve, as in the case of the Hispanics of New York, the convergence of several cognate groups. The lesson to be learned here is that ethnicity and group self-awareness are highly contextual and relative.

It can be suggested that this same process is essentially what happened in the case of inter-Latin association in California and Arizona, albeit not to the point of absorption. It also explains the Franco-Italian symbiosis in early San Francisco and why it failed to survive the accelerated immigration of Italians after 1880. During the decade that followed, stable and lasting community institutions emerged in the Italian colony (a national parish, an Italian Chamber of Commerce, two daily newspapers).²⁴ The Italians of San Francisco had by then clearly freed themselves from the need for French tutelage, so to speak, and could support an autonomous and viable organizational structure and, through it, nurture and sustain a separate and distinct group identity.

The demise of the Italian-French nexus roughly coincided with the passing of the man who had been

its pivot during the 1850s and 60s. To the last, Nicholas Larco maintained the link between the two communities that he had helped to forge: he died, in fact, in French Hospital, on March 12, 1878. He was buried by the Society of California Pioneers, of which he had been a life member and vice-president. Larco's decline in wealth and influence had begun several years earlier. In 1873, perhaps as a result of the rampant speculation of the period, his business interests suffered a severe setback from which they never recovered. From that same year, he no longer appears as an officer of the Italian Mutual Benefit Society, and he may well have withdrawn from it completely, since he was buried by the Pioneers. The following year, a man with whom Larco had had an intense, productive and mutually beneficial relationship, G. B. Cerruti, left his post as Italian consul in San Francisco. In 1875, one of his closest business associates and a native of the same Ligurian town, Luigi Lastreto, severed his relations with Larco to found his own import-export house in direct competition. As a note of human interest, an anonymous obituary related the following:

Mr. Larco had wealthy relatives in Italy who, since his failure, had been urging him to go back to his native country. His invariable answer was: "Not before I have succeeded in paying my debts," and he succumbed under his task.²⁵

It is indeed ironic that this man who had amassed great wealth and had become the major luminary of his community died practically without property and burdened with debts. In the end, Larco fell victim to the same tragic fate that had tormented the fellow immigrants he and Cerruti sought to aid in 1865, and about which the following consular report speaks so eloquently.

It remains to be added that, though he died nearly penniless, Nicholas Larco nevertheless left a rich inheritance. The mutual aid society which he founded

BELOW: *The Italian Hospital (left, foreground) was built by the Italian Benevolent Society and formally opened on September 12, 1869. It was a two-story brick building which still stands on the corner of Valley and Noe streets. The hospital closed in 1874.*

still serves the Italian community of San Francisco and administers the only Italian cemetery in America. And in spite of specific historical and sociological factors which brought it about, the cordial and productive inter-ethnic collaboration in

which Larco played so great a role speaks against a narrow ethnocentrism and can serve as an inspiration to multicultural endeavors and activities which are today all too infrequent.



March 3, 1865

CONSULATE OF ITALY
Report No. 7: General Affairs

Excellency:

I beg Your Excellency's forgiveness for neglecting my correspondence with your Ministry in recent months, but my duties here have been so overwhelming that it has been impossible to find a moment to write you.

Normal office business has increased, and continues to increase at a rapid rate. In addition, I have had to attend to several time-consuming matters: executing two complicated claims (one of which in triplicate with an English translation), decking out a ship with flags, the sale of two other ships, and a maritime exchange—all matters that could be accomplished in a very short time, if performed by two people. I have been looking for an assistant in this country, but have not found anyone suitable, and thus have to write to La Plata for help. I hope to have a capable person here within the next three or four months. I am comforted by the thought that my lateness in writing you will not be of great harm to the service, for in the last two months I have managed to make a deposit in the treasury more than one-third as high as that made during the whole of last year.

I wish to acknowledge receipt of the following dispatches:

- No. 9 General Affairs of October 22, 1864
- No. 10 General Affairs of November 9, 1864
- No. 11 General Affairs of November 30, 1864
- No. 12 General Affairs of December 28, 1864
- No. 13 General Affairs of January 13, 1865
- No. 6 Successions of December 6, 1864
- No. 7 Successions of January 14, 1865

From Dispatch No. 9, I noted that Lorenzo Peri, of the class of 1843, cannot make a second medical visit. He has not come to the office, but as soon as I see him, I shall notify him of what the Royal War Ministry has informed me through you.

I have tried everywhere to locate Carlo Raspi, but no one has been able to give me any news of him. In accordance with my instructions, his name appears regularly in *La Parola*,²⁶ together with the names of other persons for whom we are searching.

As per instructions transmitted to me with your Dispatch No. 11, I have summoned Messrs. Monteverde and Devoto, members of the class of 1844 due to be called, to appear for examinations for their requested exemptions from military service, and I have asked Luca Descalzo to pick up the letter for him enclosed in your Dispatch. Descalzo has picked up the letter, but Messrs. Monteverde and Devoto have not yet replied to my summons.

Attached to Dispatch No. 12, I found the letter informing Emanuele Berri that His Majesty has consented to bestow upon him the title of Cavalier of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus,²⁷ and I transmitted the nomination to Mr. Berri on February 19th, together with a letter from this office. Upon receipt from London of the Decoration and Diploma of the Grand-Mastership of the Order, I shall dutifully present it to him.

I enclose a receipt of the Decoration bestowed upon our distinguished fellow-countryman Mr. Nicola Larco.

In addition to having the names of the three gentlemen [Francesco Basso, Pietro Castruccio, Giuseppe Zanola] printed, requesting them to appear at the Consulate, I have written to Mr. Zanola in Victoria and to Mr. Castruccio in Marysville, notifying them of the contents of the Dispatch to which I have the honor to reply.

As for Francesco Giorgiani, he died in fact about a year ago, but instead of a fortune, he left debts. His brother Antonio, who owns a fruit business here at 421 Washington Street,²⁸ wrote to Giorgiani's widow some time ago regarding the particulars of her husband's death and, on December 23, 1864, sent her the death certificate, which I authenticated at that time.

At the time of Dispatch No. 12, I received a letter from Francesco Marangolo of Messina, in which said gentleman, who is related to the widow in question, also asks for information about Francesco Giorgiani. I believe it superfluous to write Mr. Marangolo now, as Antonio Giorgiani has already written regarding this matter.

The printed matter announced in Dispatch No. 13 has arrived. It consists of a booklet which contains the list of His Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Offices abroad as of July 1, 1864, Circular 2682 of the Admiralty on weather reports, and notices to seamen based on Circular 2682. Other notices to seamen on the Italian terminology of the compass card have also arrived, but I have not yet received the *Official Gazette*.

While I am waiting for Carlo Bonfanti to come to the

office, I wish to mention that I am placing at Your Excellency's disposal, in care of my attorney, the 13.50 *lire* which you so kindly advanced for the registration and claim of the repeal of the power of attorney of said party.

I have already summoned Messrs. G. B. Raffetto and A. De Martini to appear, and once I have had them examined, I shall transmit the results of the examinations and the doctor's report to you.

Mr. [Raffaele?] Ancarani, to whom I have conveyed the information concerning him in Dispatch No. 13, wishes me to thank you in his behalf for the steps you so kindly asked the Royal Consul at Buenos Aires to take to persuade Mr. Pezzi to pay the debts he owes Mr. Ancarani. Mr. Pezzi's real name is Bianchi, and he lives at Mission Dolores, where he has a grocery store managed by his wife, whose name is Geronima Molinari. She is French by birth, but the daughter of an Italian. Letters to him are usually addressed to Mr. Luigi Bianchi, commonly known as Blengio, Grocer, at Mission Dolores, County of San Francisco.

According to what his wife told me, Mr. Bianchi has been in Tahiti since July 6, 1864, but he will be returning soon. I have learned from a letter written him by his brother-in-law, Gerolamo Ceroni, secretary of the Martinenghi, Macchiolo & Co. store in Turin, that Mr. Ceroni sent Mr. Bianchi a letter containing some pictures, through a family coming to San Francisco. Mr. Bianchi did not receive the pictures, and since the letter did not indicate the name of the bearer, he could not search for them.

In another report, I intend to describe the succession of Alessandro Alciatore, but also must mention this subject here because it is related to a matter I have in hand.

In my Report No. 7, "Successions," of October 30, 1864, I had the honor to inform you that the court of Tuolumne County appointed a certain Nicolò Rossi of Diano Marina as administrator of the estate. He is the son of Giovanni Battista and of Paola Pizzarello. Mr. Rossi was managing a house entrusted to him by his brother Vincenzo, who had left San Francisco. According to the information I have received, his brother now resides in San Pier d'Arena (province of Genoa), and has an oil warehouse there. I have recently been informed that Nicolò Rossi shows signs (or pretends to show signs) of madness. The first evidence of this was the sale of all he possessed (and did not possess) to a certain Gaudin, a

Savoyard. Wishing to save the Alciatore estate and to protect Rossi's absent brother, I consulted with Mr. Larco on the choice of a person residing in Tuolumne County who could be of assistance.

Mr. Larco put me in touch with a certain A. B. Preston, a local judge who is now a merchant, a very influential and capable person.²⁹ I asked Mr. Preston to verify the state of Mr. Rossi's affairs, to try to have the sale annulled if it in fact had taken place, to protect in my stead the property of the absentees, and to send me a report of his findings and actions. To date I have received no reply; but I shall probably be obliged to give some compensation to Mr. Preston, and I wish to be so authorized by Mr. Vincenzo Rossi and by the Alciatore heirs.

While I am speaking of the Alciatore estate, to which my Report No. 7, "Successions," of October 30, 1864 refers, I request Your Excellency to let me have the power of attorney and the personal certificates of the heirs as soon as possible. Please caution the heirs to be careful and have the certificates authenticated by the American Consul.

A certain Tommaso Delsoldato has come to this office for assistance. Born in 1816 or 1817, son of Antonio and of Teresa Pampaloni (both deceased), his family lived some years ago one-half mile outside Porta Prato in Florence, in the parish of San Jacopo di Polverosa. Delsoldato was an only child and therefore was entitled to his mother's entire dowry of almost one thousand *scudi*, a dowry which was insured on a house belonging to the father in Capannaccia, which is also in the parish of San Jacopo di Polverosa. Mr. Delsoldato has advised me that the house has been sold, but that he never received his share of the proceeds. His mother died twenty-two years ago. Since his father married a second time, to Anna Giuntini, who bore him five sons, Delsoldato fears that they may have appropriated his share; and he wishes to know how the sale of a house that had a mortgage could take place, and what he should do to claim his maternal inheritance, as well as his legacy from his father, who has been dead for fourteen years. Delsoldato came to this country when he was very young, and there is no one in Italy he can trust regarding this matter. He feels he may not be able to obtain reliable information from his half-brothers, as they are strangers to him. Through me, he is asking Your Excellency to look into the matter and to guide him accordingly.

In reply to the sheet that was attached to Dispatch No. 7, which I promptly submitted to Innocenzo Ragazzoni in

Victoria, today I shall mail you a letter received from Victoria addressed to Mrs. Angelica Ragazzoni of Turin.

A certain Madame Maria Pascal, born Maria Laget in Turin, now residing here at 826 Union Street, has no news of her only relative, Angelo Tinivella, who in 1850 was employed at the *Gazzetta del Popolo* [a Turin Daily]. The last letter she received from him was dated May 7, 1850. If by chance Mr. Tinivella is no longer alive, Madame Pascal wishes you to let her know the whereabouts of his sisters so that she may correspond with them.

The letter attached to Dispatch No. 10 was immediately delivered to Mr. Damiano Lanfranco, who has asked me to thank Your Excellency for your kind interest in his behalf.

Count Zeltner, Consul of France in Panama, has sent me a letter pertaining to royal service matters, which I hereby transcribe for accuracy's sake and to enable you to take whatever steps Your Excellency deems opportune:

Panama, January 1, 1865

Sir and Honorable Colleague:

I am really sorry for the time that has passed between your kind letter of August 17th and my reply. I hope, however, that you will be good enough to excuse me, considering the work that overwhelms me. Indeed, I have the French, the Mexicans and the Spanish to protect, not counting your compatriots, who give me equally a lot to do. I recognize, moreover, that there is in them a spirit of understanding that facilitates my work. And, on this subject, I wish to inform the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy that one of his subjects, the Consul to Colon, Mr. J. B. Donalisio, who is in charge of our French Consulate, has rendered me his daily services in this position for the past six years. These services, being gratuitous, I am going to recommend him to Mr. Edouard Drouyn de Lhuys [French Foreign Minister] for the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and I hope that he will succeed in obtaining it for him.

He has already been decorated with the Cross of Saints Maurice and Lazarus. I have not yet spoken to him about it—as the saying goes, it is not wise to sell the skin of the bear before it is killed—but my relations with His Excellency make me hope that once more he will grant my request.

Mr. Donalisio plans to leave this year and to make

only rare and short visits to Colon, and I believe it is well to speed the case, because there are a great number of Italians settled in the Isthmus and numerous interests to protect. If I am put in charge, I will do my best, as always, but it would be well if the Italian Government would give me detailed instructions through Paris.

The Marquis [Giovanni Antonio] Migliorati [Italian resident minister in Lima] has just married a compatriot, Miss Canevaro, in Lima, Peru, and does not speak about returning for a while. I believe therefore that you should write Turin concerning Colon and Panama.

Please accept . . .

Your Excellency, with the instructions you gave me in Dispatch No. 1, upon my departure for San Francisco on March 31, 1864, you asked me, among other things, to work to increase Italian navigation in these waters, and this became one of my principal goals. It is difficult, however, due to the state of our commerce, little acquainted thus far with joint-stock ventures, to find a shipowner who will consent to make a trial run at his sole risk. Consequently, I do not believe that we will have the satisfaction of seeing our flag in these waters for a long time to come, unless we decide to make exceptional facilitations, and until the results obtained under a system of temporary protection provide the necessary incentive to establish regular shipments directly from the Royal States. We share such similar convictions that, contrary to Royal Rules, I decided to deck out two great ships, the *Re d'Italia* ("King of Italy") and the clipper *Rocco Pratolongo*, with flags, even though I was unable to find a sea captain or a crew composed of at least two-thirds Italians for either ship. From the attached report for the Admiralty, Your Excellency will learn the details of said ceremony, and I also request your support in obtaining approval for my decision.

For some time now, Mr. Passano, an attorney who is secretary of the Municipal Commission of Carrara, has planned to build a monument to Pellegrino Rossi.³⁰ He sent us a circular aimed at promoting contributions among this community on behalf of the project. I immediately had it printed in the newspaper, accompanied by my personal appeal to all Italians; but to date no one has responded. The only way to succeed in matters of this sort is to knock on every door, but time has not permitted me to do so. Also, I did not deem it appropriate, because our compatriots are constantly asked to contribute to the needs of less fortu-

nate countrymen, and I feared I might abuse their generosity and jeopardize the results of other contributions which are more vital to the welfare of this colony.

On the same subject, I am answering Mr. Passano with an enclosed letter, and I include a check for twenty-five *lire* as my personal contribution.

The Italian colony here is not as wealthy as is commonly believed abroad. The vaunted riches of the California mines—for the most part, fabulous—attracted fortune-seekers from all parts of the world; and many of our countrymen, enticed by the continued exaggerations of a paid press, left modest but secure positions in Australia, Peru, Chile and La Plata to rush to California and partake of the glorified treasures of these mountains. Once here, far from finding the promised land, they had to take on arduous, poorly paid, and unsteady work; but, being too late to back out, they of necessity resigned themselves to their fate. Many could not endure the ensuing privations, hardships and toil, and perished in the mountains; others fell victim to the daggers of bandits and the arrows of Indians. A few for whom fortune had been less grim prepared to return to Italy to enjoy the fruits of their labors, only to contract diseases which robbed them of their savings and their health, medical care being very poor in these inhospitable places.

This situation is a particular calamity for those Italians whose aspirations were more limited and who preferred to settle in the various cities of the State, dedicating themselves to commerce and industry. Virtually every day they must record among their liabilities large sums given to the above-mentioned unfortunates, without even the satisfaction of knowing they have been definitely cured. For this reason, the Mutual Benefit Society was founded in 1858 by Cavalier Larco. However, this organization assists only its members, who comprise about fifteen percent of the Italian colony. The only recourse for others is to knock at the doors of their countrymen for assistance.

I became aware of this situation shortly after I arrived here, and began studying possible remedies. Unfortunately, the Society was at that time in the midst of a power struggle among rival factions, as I informed you in my Report No. 1 of June 25th. I believed it prudent not to become involved in its affairs until all differences were resolved. In time, the embittered spirits calmed down and I became a member, and was subsequently elected president of the Society at the meeting of January 7th. At the

first meeting I conducted, I urged the council to take steps to arrange assistance for those who needed it, and the council agreed that the only feasible solution would be to build a shelter for these unfortunates.³¹ As we had only \$6,458.45 (i.e., 32,292.25 *lire*) in the treasury at the time (see the financial report in No. 221 of *La Parola*, which I am sending you separately), it was impossible to commence work on the project immediately. However, I was delegated to prepare an estimate of building costs and to dispatch copies to various Italian centers in the State in order to predispose them to make contributions when we begin our campaign for donations. To date I have had responses from Jackson, Columbia, Victoria, Virginia City, Sacramento and Newton, all in favor of the projected building.

Your Excellency may rest assured, however, that I shall not permit the first stone to be laid until the entire amount needed for construction has been raised. As I collect the funds, the money will be deposited with the French Savings and Loan Society, whose annual dividend has never been less than one percent per month. I shall keep you informed of the project's development, and I believe that construction will begin at an early date.

As I have previously advised you, there are a number of unfortunate individuals among the Italian community here. One who particularly worries me is Davide Cochi, son of Lorenzo and Marianna Cochi (he does not remember his mother's maiden name). He was born in Florence in 1837 and was a waiter by trade. This young fellow, after having spent a long period in the mines and having amassed about three thousand dollars, became gravely ill. He received bad medical care and, after a year, lost his sight. Some of his friends brought him to San Francisco last August when he had no more money, and since there is no free hospital here, they left him with me. I felt he should return to Italy and started a collection, raising \$162.00. But as Mr. Cochi's worsened condition prevented him from making the sea journey, I rented a room for him in the home of a certain Vittoria Maltesi from Sardinia, and urged Dr. Vincenzo Pollastri to treat him. The doctor kindly offered his services gratuitously. With the onset of the cold weather, Mr. Cochi asked to postpone his departure until spring, assuring me that he would make the voyage then. I consented, as the doctor confirmed that a long winter crossing would indeed be dangerous for him. But now that spring is almost here, I

The Nicholas Larco Building as it looks today, located at 470 Jackson Street and owned by Marion Solari (Mrs. William Solari). It was constructed by Larco in 1852. He occupied the building until 1877. The building has housed the consulates of three nations: In 1856 and 1857, Larco was consul for Chile in San Francisco, with offices at this address. At the same time, Camilo Martin was the consul for Spain and appears to have had both lodgings and offices in Larco's building. Still later (1861 to 1864-65), French consul De Gazotta had his consulate here. The French consulate then moved next door to 472 Jackson Street (formerly 434 Jackson Street), where it remained until 1876.



find that Mr. Cochi is proving unexpectedly reluctant to keep his word.

Several of his acquaintances have told me that he does not wish to return to Italy because he has had no contact with his family since leaving over sixteen years ago, and is ashamed to see them in his present condition. Mr. Cochi acknowledges that he has been an ungrateful son and says that he would prefer to die here rather than seek help from the family he abandoned.

I have threatened to abandon him myself; but how can I carry out the threat? He is blind, in poor health, and all of his friends from the old days have disappeared. In the meantime, the proceeds from the money collected for him have long since been spent; to start a new collection now would be an impossible task, particularly when funds are so urgently needed for the future hospital. Therefore, I am paying fifty dollars per month for his room, care and medicine. I beg Your Excellency to make some inquiries about the man's relatives to see if we might obtain assistance from them, or at least some encouragement from his father for the son's return home. If he left now, I would be glad to pay for the voyage out of my own pocket, so as to lift this burden from my shoulders; but if he continues to impose financial sacrifices on me, I shall not be in a position to help him much longer.

I am also very concerned about Luigi Bidoni, son of Giuseppe and of Anna Marossi, who was born in Venice on December 21, 1834. Mr. Bidoni earned some money inland in California, but came to this office for help two months ago, after he had been wounded by two rifle shots fired by an assassin in the Sacramento area. He also was afflicted by rheumatism. Having attempted without success to find some assistance for him among our countrymen, and seeing that otherwise he would have died in the streets, I invited him to my home; and thanks to the gratuitous services of the good Dr. Pollastri, Mr. Bidoni is now on his way to recovery.

This young man is well-mannered, speaks several languages, and wishes only to return to work and build a modest future for himself. Although he is still convalescing, I have found a position for him on the staff of *La Parola* and, starting this month, he will earn twenty dollars a month. I hope to find other sources of income for him also. Mr. Bidoni has neither written to nor received letters from his family for the past ten years. His parents do not know of his whereabouts, and he is not

sure whether they are still living. If Your Excellency could be so kind as to inquire into the past of this young fellow and then relate your findings to me, you would bring consolation to his parents and guidance to me as to how I can best help him.

Isacco Selmini, of the Milan Hospital, arrived here from Mexico in September of 1864, his legs covered with ulcerated sores. As he had no contacts in this area, and no means, he appealed to the Consulate. I started a collection at once, and was able to have him cared for with the proceeds. Unfortunately, he started doing hard work on a farm before he had completely recovered, and his condition became more critical than before. As a result, he is now a patient at Saint Mary's Hospital, where several Italians pay forty dollars per month for his care. Since he is suffering from an illness incurable in this country, I have reached an understanding with Mr. Larco to have him repatriated, and we are now collecting the necessary funds for his voyage. I do not know if we will be able to raise the entire sum (about \$150.00), but if not, I should like in this instance to debit the difference to the Royal Government.

With Dispatch No. 5 of July 25, 1864, you requested me to conduct a search for Carlo Caprile, born in Fontanabuona. I published his name in the newspaper and wrote, in vain, to Stefano Zerga, in Newton. Today, I was finally able to talk with an Italian who knows him and who is about to leave for Newton. He told me that Mr. Caprile still lives in Newton (in Eldorado County) and is fairly well-to-do. The probable reason he has sent no news of himself to his family is that he does not know how to write. I have asked the gentleman I spoke to today to write a letter for Mr. Caprile and to send it to me as soon as possible.

Towards the end of the day, Mr. G. B. Raffetto came into the office, and in accordance with the instructions I received with Dispatch No. 13 of January 13th, I proceeded to have him examined to determine the nature of his illness. I attach a report accompanied by a medical certificate. I have also included a letter for Mr. Raffetto's father.

A certain Ferdinando Mauri, son of Pasquale deceased, born in Meta/Piano, Castellamare, Naples, was part of the crew of the national brigantine *Il Veloce* ("The Speedy"), Giovanni Ecarina, captain, which left Naples on March 19, 1864, and arrived in New York in June.

While going back on board ship on June 24, 1864, Mr. Mauri was attacked by four men who threatened him with a pistol and forced him to board their lifeboat. They took him on board the American clipper *Norway*, Cumes, captain, which weighed anchor for California a few minutes later.

Unable to speak or understand a word of English, Mr. Mauri could not explain to the captain that he had not enlisted voluntarily, and thus could not even obtain permission to return to *Il Veloce* to collect his belongings. In consequence, the poor man had to endure a crossing which lasted several months, rounding Cape Horn during the severe winter, possessing only one shirt and one pair of trousers. I will not go into a lengthy description of the harsh treatment he was forced to endure, including beatings with a club and being hung from a crossbeam because he could not understand commands given in English. Suffice it to say that when Mr. Mauri came to this office for assistance, he was almost naked and in a very sorrowful state of health. Verifying his report, which I do not hesitate to believe, I welcomed Mr. Mauri to my home and provided him with clothing and medical care. I also found employment for him so that he could earn some money while waiting for a ship to take him home; and I contacted the Royal Minister in Washington, furnishing him the names of the agents of the *Norway* to see if the culprits could be found and forced to give Mr. Mauri the wages that he so painfully earned, as well as the ten dollars taken from him when he was abducted. I also wrote to the Royal Consul in New York in case he had already registered Mr. Mauri as a deserter, asking him to correct the record and to inform the appropriate authorities.

Now I must ask Your Excellency to pay Mr. Mauri's wife the remainder of his salary, amounting to twenty-eight dollars, which remained in the possession of Captain Ecarina. She should also receive all the effects her husband left behind on board *Il Veloce*, in the captain's quarters. There should also be twenty United States paper dollars in the chest containing Mr. Mauri's belongings. The name of Mr. Mauri's wife is Maria Caffiero, and she lives with their three children in the town of Meta, at the home of her mother-in-law, Luigia Porzia, widow Mauri.

After many misfortunes, Mr. Mauri is now well-employed (he earns thirty dollars a month, plus lodging

and food), and would like to accumulate some savings before returning home. Since he is exempt from land and sea duties, being an only son, he has requested permission to reside for a while longer in this country. As Captain Ecarina still has the document stating that Mr. Mauri is not subject to military service, I ask Your Excellency to advise me if I can grant his request.

I wanted to enclose last year's financial reports with this package, but time does not permit me to do so, and I shall mail them, without fail, the next time I write.

I have the honor of signing myself with the deepest respect,

Your humble and devoted servant,
GioBatta Cerruti

P.S. I was unable to finish the report for the Royal Admiralty to which I refer in this report and shall send it with the next package.

GBC

The photograph on page 360 is courtesy of the Italian Benevolent Society. All others were provided by The North Beach Museum, San Francisco.

Notes

1. The full archival citation for Cerruti's consular report is as follows: Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Rome, *Corrispondenza diplomatica e consolare*, busta 266, *Consolato di San Francisco*, n. 7, *affari in genere*, G. B. Cerruti to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, March 3, 1865. At the time, Gen Alfonso La Marmora was Foreign Minister. The original twenty-four page manuscript is written in Italian, with the exception of one and a half pages (the letter of Count Zeltner) in French.
2. Dino Cinel, "Conservative Adventurers: Italian Migrants in Italy and San Francisco" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1979).
3. For general information on the early period of Italian settlement in the City, see Cinel, "Conservative Adventurers," Chap. VIII; Deanna Paoli Gumina, *The Italians of San Francisco, 1850-1930* (New York, 1978); Ernest S. Falbo, ed., "State of California in 1856: Federico Biesta's Report to the Sardinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs," *California Historical Society*

- Quarterly*, LXII (1963), 311-333; Andres F. Rolle, *The Immigrant Upraised* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1968), Chap. XII; Francesco M. Nicosia, *Italian Pioneers of California* (San Francisco, 1960). For additional references, see American Italian Historical Assn./Western Regional Chapter, *The Italian American Experience in California: A Bibliography* (San Francisco, 1977). It is of interest to know that both Francesca Loverci of the University of Rome and Sebastian Fichera of the University of California, Los Angeles, are currently working on histories of the Italians in San Francisco covering the periods, respectively, 1848-1900 and 1850-1940.
4. The North Beach Museum, sponsored by Eureka Federal Savings and located in the Cavalli Building at 1435 Stockton St., was inaugurated in May, 1978. Devoted to the history of the North Beach neighborhood and to the varied heritage of its successive ethnic communities, the Museum has in a short time gained much well-deserved public interest.
 5. For a biographical sketch of Cerruti up to the time of his appointment, see Ministero per gli Affari Esteri, *Annuario diplomatico del Regno d'Italia per l'anno 1865* (Turin, n.d.), p. 111.
 6. Cf. Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1870, p. 840, and 1871, p. 893. Idwal Jones' brief account of Cerruti's tour of duty, in "Evviva San Francisco," *The American Mercury*, XII (1927), 157-158, is totally fanciful.
 7. Cf. Falbo, "State of California," 326.
 8. L. F. Byington and Oscar Lewis, eds., *The History of San Francisco* (Chicago-San Francisco, 1931), III, 370.
 9. In 1852. Cf. Carlo Dondero, "L'Italia agli Stati Uniti ed in California," *L'Italia Coloniale*, Vol. II, No. 5 (May 1901), 15.
 10. *La Scintilla Italiana* (San Francisco), March 18, 1878, p. 2: "the major luminary of our colony."
 11. Cf. Cinel, "Conservative Adventurers," p. 429. The restriction was later lifted, at an unspecified date.
 12. For the early history of this organization, see Philip M. and Sandra R. Montesano, *La Società Italiana di Mutua Beneficenza: The Italian Hospital, 1858-1874* (Colma, California, 1978). The authors incorrectly identify Spilvalo as a republican. On the Society's Italian Cemetery in Colma, established in 1899, see the recent article by Laurie Itow, "The Remains of Italians' History Here," *San Francisco Examiner*, June 20, 1979, p. B-2.
 13. Cf. Dondero, *L'Italia*, 15.
 14. Constructed circa 1852, the edifice which housed Larco's business still stands as the Solari Building East at 470 Jackson St.
 15. It would appear that quite a few other early Italian settlers also re-emigrated from Peru. Carlo Dondero, *L'Italia*, 14-15, estimated that of the approximately 300 Italians in the City in the early 1850s, one third had come from South America, principally from Peru and Argentina. The Mutual Benefit Society in 1862 made an agreement with its counterpart in Lima to extend services to their respective members who might take ill while sojourning in California or Peru. Cf. Società Italiana di Mutua Beneficenza Archives, Italian Cemetery, Colma, Ms. *Scrapbook*, p. 5.
 16. For all the preceding activities of Larco within and with the French community, see Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1860, p. 444; Daniel Lévy, *Les Français en Californie* (San Francisco, 1884), pp. 183-184, 202-203; California Historical Society Library, San Francisco, Ms. 249, Buenaventura Mining Co. Papers (1863); Dorothy H. Huggins, ed., *Continuation of the Annals of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1939), Pt. I, 79.
 17. *Société Française d'Epargne et de Prévoyance Mutuelle/Società Francese di Risparmio e di Mutua Beneficenza*.
 18. For these interpretations, see Cinel, "Conservative Adventurers," pp. 426-427, 443, 448-449.
 19. Professor Francesco Loverci in a letter to the author of August 31, 1979.
 20. Cf. Luis M. de la Sierra, "Reseña histórica de la parroquia de Ntra. Sra. de Guadalupe," *La Azucena* (San Francisco), Vol. VI, Nos. 4-6 (April-June 1912), 29, and Gumina, *The Italians of San Francisco*, p. 171.
 21. See, respectively, Lévy, *Les Français*, p. 195, and Phylis Cancelli Martinelli, "Italy in Phoenix," *Journal of Arizona History*, XVIII (1977), 321.
 22. Cf. Carlo Dondero, *Relazione sugli Italiani della Costa del Pacifico* (San Francisco, 1897), p. 9, and Rolle, *The Immigrant*, p. 96.
 23. For the above cases, see Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge, 1956), pp. vi-viii; Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1952), pp. 86-89; Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 101-103, 139-140, 239-240.
 24. St. Peter's Church (1884), now Sts. Peter and Paul; Italian Chamber of Commerce (1885); *La Voce del Popolo* began daily publication in 1889, followed by *L'Italia* in 1890.
 25. *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco), March 14, 1878, p. 1. Further information regarding Larco, aside from the sources already cited, may be found in the various San Francisco city directories, 1850-78; Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Gregory Yale Papers, documents in the case of Nicholas Larco vs. Gabriel Maldonado et al. (1860-61); Society of California Pioneers, San Francisco, Ms. *Mortuary Records, 1865-1884*, p. 73; "Catastrofi bancarie. Un poco di storia retrospettiva," *La Voce del Popolo* (San Francisco), March 29, 1893. Larco arrived in San Francisco on August 25, 1849, was admitted to the Society of California Pioneers in 1863, and served as its vice-president in 1869-70. Mr. Leon Rovetta has completed a biography, *Don Nicholas Larco & Associates, San*

San Francisco Italians

- Francisco, 1849-1878*, which will soon be published.
26. A semi-weekly Italian-language newspaper published in San Francisco from 1863 to 1866. Monarchist in tendency, it was funded by the consulate through the insertion of official notices on its pages.
 27. The *Ordine Equestre dei SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro*, a knightly order instituted in the sixteenth century by Emanuele Filiberto, Duke of Savoy.
 28. Antonio Giorgiani, founding member and officer of the Italian Mutual Benefit Society and shareholder in the Buenaventura Mining Co.
 29. Alvin Bacon Preston (b. 1829), pioneer, miner, and Justice of the Peace in Jamestown from 1856 to 1878. Cf. *A History of Tuolumne County* (San Francisco, 1882), pp. 416-417.
 30. The moderate Minister of the Interior of Pius IX, whose assassination on November 15, 1848 precipitated the Roman Revolution and the flight of the Pope.
 31. The Italian Hospital was finally erected in 1869, but closed in 1874 due to financial difficulties. See Montesano, *La Società Italiana*.